

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 07867 121215Z
ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 VO-03 SCA-01
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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1021
INFO AMEMBASSY GENEVA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 7867

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, TH
SUBJECT: WCRP ACTIVITIES - LEAP DAL

REF: STATE 80153

1. WE NOTE IN THE DEPARTMENT'S OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THE NEED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE LEAP DAL REFUGEES THAT NEITHER OUR REPORT OF CONVERSATION WITH MOI UNDERSECRETARY DAMRONG IS CITED (BANGKOK 7435) NOR IS ALLUSION MADE TO THE UNHCR'S UNWILLINGNESS TO ASSIST THESE STRANDED UNFORTUNATES NOTED IN OUR 7557. WE CAN ONLY AGREE THAT SOMETHING SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT THE REFUGEES BUT MUST, IN DEFENSE OF THE RTG, NOTE THAT NEITHER THE MALAYSIAN NOR SINGAPOREAN GOVERNMENTS APPEAR TO BE EXHIBITING ANY INTEREST EXCEPT TO SUGGEST THEY GO ELSEWHERE. IN RESPONSE TO OUR DEMANDS, THE RTG WOULD PROBABLY RESPOND THAT THE LEAP DAL IS NOT ITS PROBLEM SINCE THE VESSEL IS APPARENTLY IN MALAYSIAN OR SINGAPORE WATERS AND ALMOST ALL THE PASSENGERS WERE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS WHO NOT ONLY WENT ABOARD AND DEPARTED THAI SOIL VOLUNTARILY, BUT IF RUMOR IS TO BE CREDITED,
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BANGKO 07867 121215Z

PROBABLY PAID FOR THE PRIVILEGE.

2. IN OUR SUMMARY REPORT OF CONVERSATION WITH SENIOR RTG REFUGEE OFFICIALS APRIL 4 (BANGKOK 7435) WE DESCRIBED THE AMBIVALENCE AND FRUSTRATION FELT BY THE THAI WHO CONSIDER THAT THEY HAVE DONE MORE IN PROPORTIONATE TERMS THAN ANY OTHER COUNTRY FOR INDOCHINESE REFUGEES, INCLUDING THE U.S. THE RTG,

WE BELIEVE, IS GRATEFUL FOR U.S. MONETARY ASSISTANCE AND FOR OUR CONTINUING EFFORTS TO EASE THE BURDEN. THE THAI RECOGNIZE THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A COUNTRY OF FIRST ASYLUM AS NOT ONLY THOSE OF INTERNATIONAL COMITY BUT AS RESPONSIBILITIES WHICH STEM FROM THEIR VERY CULTURAL ETHIC.

3. THE RTG IS DEEPLY DISTURBED BY THE CONTINUING INFLUX OF BOAT CASES AND THE IMPLICATION OF HOUSING VAST NUMBERS OF INDOCHINESE ON THEIR SOIL NOT ONLY IN TERMS OF A PALESTINIAN CAMP SYNDROME BUT IN TERMS OF LOCAL POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS. AS WE NOTED IN OUR 7435, THE RTG WHILE UNDERSTANDING, IS LESS THAN ENCHANTED WITH UNHCR PRESSURES FOR LOCAL RESETTLEMENT AND LACK OF MOVEMENT TO THIRD COUNTRIES. AT THE VERY MINIMUM, THE RTG EXPECTS TO BE ASSISTED WITH THE PRICKLY PROBLEM OF RESETTLING VIETNAMESE OF ALL STRIPES, BOAT AND NON-BOAT CASE ALIKE. THE RTG ALSO EXPECTS ASSISTANCE WITH RESETTLEMENT OF HIGH VISIBILITY LAO AND KHMER WHO TURN UP. IT MUST BE REITERATED THAT THAILAND IS IN FACT BEING ASKED TO RETAIN 60-70,000 INDOCHINESE AND GRANT THEM BENEFITS NOT AVAILABLE TO MANY OF THEIR OWN CITIZENS DURING A TIME OF CONTINUING REGIONAL UNREST. IT IS ALSO CLEAR TO US THAT THE RTG IS NOT OVERLY IMPRESSED WITH THE FACT THAT THE U.S. INTENDS TO TAKE ONLY 25-30 PERCENT OF THE BOAT CASES, DESPITE OUR EFFORTS TO EXPLAIN OUR CRITERIA AND PRACTICAL CONSTRAINTS.

4. WE CONCLUDE THAT THERE WILL BE FEW TAKERS OF THE LEAP DAL GROUP. THE RTG, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF OFFERING

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 07867 121215Z

STAGING AREAS FOR THEIR COUNTRY RESETTLEMENT OR ARRESTING THE PERPETRATORS, HAS DISPLAYED LITTLE INTEREST.

5. NEVERTHELESS, WE RECOGNIZE THE NEED TO GET OFF DEAD CENTER AND WISH TO TENDER A SUGGESTED SOLUTION. ANY FURTHER DEMARCHE TO THE THAI MUST CONTAIN SOME QUID PRO QUO. SUCH A QUID MIGHT BE TO OFFER TO RELAX, ON A ONE TIME BASIS, THE CURRENT GUIDELINES FOR THE CE PROGRAM UNDER WHICH RUBRIC WE COULD OFFER TO TAKE AN EQUIVALENT NUMBER OF OTHER QUALIFIED INDOCHINESE REFUGEES FROM NON-BOAT REFUGEE CENTERS IN EXCHANGE FOR AN RTG AGREEMENT PERMITTING THE LEAP DAL REFUGEES TO BE RETURNED. IF THE RTG WOULD AGREE TO SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT, AND THERE ARE OBVIOUS DIFFICULTIES INHERENT IN SUCH A SOLUTION, NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS THE PROVISION OF TRANSPORT FOR THE REFUGEES FROM THE VESSEL'S CURRENT LOCATION TO THAILAND, WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO RESOLVE A NETTLESOME PROBLEM YET AVOID REGARDING THIS TRAGIC OPPORTUNISM WHICH COULD BECOME EPIDEMIC.

WHITEHOUSE

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